



Perceptions of heat-susceptibility in older persons: Barriers to adaptation

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Abstract:

The increase in the frequency of very hot weather that is a predicted consequence of climate change poses an emerging threat to public health. Extreme heat can be harmful to the health of older persons who are known to be amongst the most vulnerable in the community. This study aimed to investigate factors influencing the ability of older persons to adapt to hot conditions, and barriers to adaptation. A qualitative study was conducted in Adelaide, Australia, involving focus groups and interviews with stakeholders including key personnel involved in aged care, community services, government sectors, emergency services and policy making. Findings revealed a broad range of factors that underpin the heat-susceptibility of the aged. These were categorized into four broad themes relating to: physiology and an age-related decline in health; socioeconomic factors, particularly those influencing air conditioning use; psychological issues including fears and anxieties about extreme heat; and adaptive strategies that could be identified as both enablers and barriers. As a consequence, the ability and willingness to undertake behavior change during heatwaves can therefore be affected in older persons. Additionally, understanding the control panels on modern air conditioners can present challenges for the aged. Improving heat-health knowledge and addressing the social and economic concerns of the older population will assist in minimizing heat-related morbidity and mortality in a warming climate.

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Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Health Professional, Policymaker

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

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Temperature

Temperature: Extreme Heat

Geographic Feature: 

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Urban

Geographic Location: 

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Australasia

Health Impact: 

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury, Other Health Impact

Other Health Impact: heat stress

Medical Community Engagement: 

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change


A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation: 

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern: 

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Elderly

Resource Type: 

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Resilience: 

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale: 

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time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content